

Socio-cultural environment and children's education

A study based on among the Tea Gardens population of Dibrugarh District.

Dr Sangeeta Saikia
Assistant Professor
Department of Home Science
MDKG College, Dibrugarh

Abstract:

Tea is the second most popular drink in the world, after water. Assam produce largest volume of tea in India in its 850 (approx.) number big Tea gardens and more than one lakh small tea gardens. There are more than 20 lakh people directly or indirectly engaged in the tea Industry. Tea community people are the backbone of the industry. The development of state of Assam is impossible without overall development of the tea Garden communities. This study is attempted to know about the socio-cultural environment and children's education among the tea garden population under the Dibrugarh District. Descriptive and random analytical methods have been used for the study.

Introduction:

Education is a catalyst of human development it provides people with the tools and knowledge needed to understand today's world and prepares them to participate meaningfully in their own development and the society at large. A country cannot pave the way of true development if a huge pool of the population remain illiterates and are living in such society or cultural environment. Tea garden workers are one of the prominent groups of people in Assam who remain engaged in the tea garden work for more than a century. The tea garden workers contributed enormously towards the state's revenue exchequer but yet the educational status of the tea garden workers is still in the pathetic state.

Although tea industry has passed almost 175 years that includes 75 years after independence, the socio-economic development of tea tribe community has not reached up to the level. The literacy rate of tea garden workers is roughly around 46% in Assam whereas the literacy rate of the whole state is 72%. In Dibrugarh District alone there are more than 140 tea garden with an estimate of approximately 6.5 lakhs tea garden workers population. Low level of literacy rate is the indicators to show the alarmingly low level of education among the tea garden worker community.

In the present study, we have analyzed the social background, socio-cultural environment and the education among the tea garden workers of Dibrugarh District of Assam.

Objective of the Study:

To study the influence of socio-cultural environment on children's education of the tea garden worker families.

Methodology:

Data for the present study were collected from two basic sources namely: primary sources where data were collected with the help of structured interview schedule, interview and personal observations.

The secondary data were collected from different sources such as books, journals, newspapers etc.

Socio-cultural Environment in the tea workers society:

A society is a kind of community (or a part of a community) whose members have become socially conscious of their mode of life, and is united by a common set of aims and values. The members of any society has a set of technique for bringing up and educating their children (Ottaway, 1953).

The culture exercises a profound influence over the people of the society where it exists. The way of life of the person is determined to a great extent by the cultural environment where he lives. The culture has got an important role in the education especially in case of children education. The parent is the first educator of the child, and they still maintain an educative function throughout the child upbringing.

The tea garden workers' society is a heterogeneous society in terms of its caste/tribes and ethno lingual composition. The forefathers of the present generation of tea garden workers were migrated from different places of Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and West Bengal in the past with different customs, traditions, cultural background and ultimately formed the tea garden workers' society with admixture of different socio-cultural attributes.

Most of the family members of the tea garden workers in the studied gardens were either illiterate or half literate i.e. studied upto primary level or dropout at secondary level. We have analyzed the dropout rate considering all the children of the particular gardens in the age between 11-15 yrs. Dropout rate is significantly very high at around 16% among the elder children of the tea garden workers specially in the class-V and above onward. So, the young children did not find any person as a role model immediately to follow within their own family

or in the neighborhood. They also did not get any direct help in the learning or in any other educational activities at the formative stages of their childhood.

Observation was made on the different aspects of the socio-cultural environment of the tea garden workers in the studied gardens. Main emphasis was given on the housing facility, number of rooms in the residence, electricity facility, bathroom facility, road connectivity, relationship with the neighbors, sleeping and rising habits and possession of household items. It was observed that sufficient physical space and home environment which is required by any children to study is often compromised in such living condition. Most of the tea garden workers were living in a congested house with the member of three generations from father, children and grandchildren.

Half of the respondents (49.60%) in our study have their own private bathroom facility. The other half of the respondents uses the community bathroom in the respective lines or the colony of the workers.

The road condition in the workers line of the studied gardens was either brick road or the *kutchra* road. Respondents did not mention any difficulties to carry out their normal daily life due to road condition.

While asking about the daily life of the respondents we found that respondents of these gardens were maintaining different lifestyles and habits. The elder generations of the teagarden workers were in the habit of sleeping before 8 pm and got up in the early morning. Nowadays, sleeping time was found a bit late due to having electricity facility in some of the houses. This change of extending hours of the evening before sleep would have a positive impact in the child education if the same could be properly utilized as the study hours of the children.

Educational Scenario:

The medium of instruction in the tea garden's L.P. School was very important considering the fact that majority of the tea garden workers speak "*Sadri*", a common lingual-franca among the tea garden community. We tried to study the preference of language the respondent have as a medium of instruction in the tea garden LP school. It seems that majority of the respondents do not consider their own language for the basic medium of the instruction. This may be due to non-availability of any reference or textbooks in this language. About 90.40% respondent preferred "*Assamese*" as the language for the medium of instruction.

Regularity in attendance of the school and the children's interest to go to school are yet another factors responsible for spread of education among the children. It was found that majority of children have developed a habit of going to school slowly.

Parent's role at home is also a determining factor to acquire proper education of their children. In case of tea garden workers, most of the earlier generation people were illiterate and they cannot really look after the children's study at home.

It is heartening to note that 98% respondents expressed their willingness that their children should go to school. This has proved that parents are interested to send their children to school. Though majority of the respondent were illiterate, but their eagerness for children's education is quite evident.

In the light of parent's responsibility towards the children's education, we wanted to know whether they visited their children's school or not and the frequency of such visit. A section of parents want to visit the school of their children to get a first-hand account of the performance of their children from the concerned teachers. The frequencies of such visits vary depending on the availability of the time and willingness of the parents to do so. Here we found that, more than half of respondents preferred their children to have their education up to the level of matriculation. Expectation up to graduation or education in technical education was less among the respondents of the studied garden.

Conclusion:

It will be worthwhile to formulate some ideas emerged out of the concrete understanding of the educational scenario among the tea workers community which is vital for overall growth and development of the state of Assam. Respondents quite often expressed their desired aims for their children education. Non availability of the High school near the Tea garden and its vicinity is one of the reason of drop-out after class-V. Parents are mainly responsible to create a conducive environment for study both within the family as well as in the community. Besides, an effort should be made by the parent to spend their limited earning in proper way. Savings is not a regular habit among the Tea garden workers community. Alcoholism and its ill effects within the family are very common among the Tea garden workers. The Children of such family suffer due to lack of proper care, guidance, socio-cultural environment and adequate financial support which ultimately affect the Children education.

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